Washington Park Arboretum

BULLETIN

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Washington Park Arboretum

The Arboretum is a 230-acre living museum displaying internationally renowned collections of oaks, conifers, camellias, Japanese maples, hollies and a profusion of woody plants from the Pacific Northwest and around the world. Aesthetic enjoyment gracefully coexists with science in this spectacular urban green space on the shores of Lake Washington. Visitors come to learn, explore, relax or reflect in Seattle's largest public garden.

The Washington Park Arboretum is managed cooperatively by the University of Washington and Seattle Parks and Recreation; the Arboretum Foundation is its major support organization.

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ABOVE: *Ilex bioritsensis*, a rarely grown holly species native to China and Taiwan, will be featured in the newly restored Arboretum Ilex collection. For further information about the future of the Arboretum's hollies, see the article on page 11.

ON THE COVER: This shrubby mountain ash, *Sorbus reducta*, is native to western China. It grows only 12 to 18 inches tall, has pink fruit and bronze-tinted foliage late in fall. Since it spreads by underground runners to a distance of 3 feet, it can be useful as a ground cover in sunny areas (zones 6-10). It may be seen in the entry court at the Center for Urban Horticulture. (Photo by Richie Steffen.)

Native Abundance

This edition of our Bulletin brings pleasant reminders of the beauty and abundance of plant life in the Pacific Northwest. These include a couple of delightful (and practical) surprises: a colorful collection of culinary ideas for salal berries and a survey of native plant resources for the region's gardeners.

This native abundance brings to mind some of the attractions and resources here at Washington Park Arboretum. Have you visited the recently installed Native Knoll? This native understory restoration project provides wildlife habitat by replacing invasives with valued native plants. Planning and gardening for Native Knoll were done largely by the Arboretum Foundation's Native Plant Study Group (another area horticultural resource). Brochures are available at the Graham Visitors Center.

If you're looking for some native bounty for your own garden, stop by the Arboretum Foundation's Pat Calvert Greenhouse for its weekly plant sale (Tuesday mornings, with a small selection available daily on the cart at the Graham Visitors Center entrance). You'll find starts and young plants propagated from the Arboretum collection, including native trees and shrubs. Greenhouse volunteers also provide plants for the Foundation's popular spring and fall plants sales, so look there too.

Autumn beauty abounds at Washington Park Arboretum as nights grow cooler and days shorter. Visit the Arboretum for a magnificent show of local color (some provided by non-native plants, to be fair). Don't forget to bring out-of-town guests for a glimpse of the Northwest's most extensive plant collection and a walk along the recently restored Duck Bay shoreline. ~

Deborah Andrews, Executive Director,
Arboretum Foundation

The pinnate leaves of *Sorbus commixta*, native to Korea and Japan, open bronze in early spring, then change to light green, and finally become vivid red to yellow in fall.
Trees grow 20 feet wide and 20 to 30 feet tall. To observe this tree in the Arboretum this autumn, visit grid coordinates 23-4E, 24-4E, 24-5E, 25-4E.

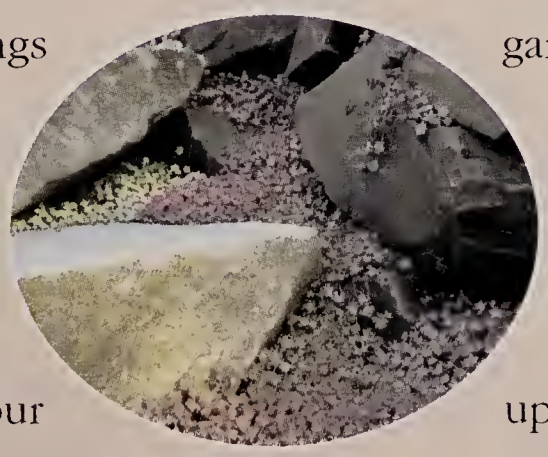
COMBINATIONS UNLOCKED

The Whys & Wherefores of Favorite Plant Combinations

11 Adorning Granite

By Duane Kelly / Photos by Alice Heck Kelly

Rarely in life do things turn out as we expect. The development of one's garden invariably supports this conclusion.



The major structural and earth-moving work was done in our garden 10 years ago. Tom Iversen of Kemper/Iversen Ltd. (Seattle) designed the garden and oversaw the structural work and major plantings. Our garden faces west and is fairly evenly divided into an upper and lower level. A major

In the Kellys' garden, these striking granite steps are framed by a colorful, multi-textured tapestry. **INSET:** The rosettes of this dusky pink sedum are a pleasing complement to the gray of the granite.

feature of Tom's design was eight granite steps, cut in generous proportions and dry laid, connecting the lower and upper gardens.

Located in the center of the garden and connecting its two levels, the steps had the effect of dividing the garden into four quadrants or "rooms." The planting plan for these rooms emerged from long conversations among Tom, my wife Alice and me. The blueprint was detailed, chock full of those round squiggles landscape architects like to draw to represent plants. And Alice and I were soon to learn that all those little circles made a sound: ka-ching, ka-ching, as our budget disappeared.

When the steps were installed, their size, the coloring of the stone, and their central location combined to make an impressive feature. But something wasn't right; the granite looked harsh and naked. When I said something felt missing, Tom suggested I get me to the nursery, buy a bunch of low-growing sedums, then plop them around the steps. I immediately visited two or three nurseries and spent at most $40 (this was 10 years ago) buying any sedum (*Sedum* species, also called stonecrop) that caught my fancy.

Today those granite steps are perhaps the most visually striking element in the garden. The humble sedums form a colorful, multi-textured tapestry that frames the stone. The sedums were the garden's least expensive plantings and can be found nowhere on the blueprint. Tom's tossed-off planting suggestion, intended, I suspect, to get me out of his hair as much as to improve the steps, has proved to be as solid as the granite.

Successful Sedum Selections

At least ten varieties of sedums grow around the steps. I've lost some of the plant tags, but varieties I know I have include *Sedum spurium* 'Schorbuser Blut' (or 'Dragon's Blood'), *S.* 'Ruby Glow,' *S. spathulifolium*

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'Cape Blanco,' *S. spathulifolium* 'Carnea,' and *S. spurium* 'Variegatum' (or 'Tricolor'). There's the occasional addition; a friend just gave me two pots of *S. rupestre* 'Angelina,' which I intend to find room for. Not all varieties have succeeded; *S. makinoi* 'Ogon,' a new form that came on the market from Japan several years ago, has petered out.

This planting has required little maintenance. The steps receive only a little spillover water from the irrigation system, but that's all sedums require, as they come from mountainous, well-drained terrain. They thrive on their hot western exposure. I've never fertilized.

Weeding is simple and unavoidable. In order to traverse the garden, I have to walk on the steps, which means the only way I could ignore the weeds is by being blind. So weeding consists of picking out invaders—mostly violets and oxalis—as I walk up and down in transit to other parts of the garden. This continual low-level attention is all the sedums require to look their best, adorning the granite steps.

Over the last decade, I have completely changed the plantings in the garden's beds at least three times. And as I write this I have more new ideas, which I am trying to repress. The steps, however, are one of the few areas of the garden that I have not monkeyed with. That granite, fringed with sedums, has proved to be just fine as is, thank you very much. ~

Duane Kelly and his wife Alice founded the Northwest Flower & Garden Show 18 years ago. His company also produces the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show every March. He is a long-time supporter of the Arboretum Foundation and in the mid-1990s served a two-year term as President. In his spare time he writes plays.

CELEBRATING SILVER:

The Creation of The South Seattle Community College Arboretum

By Van Bobbitt

"I never knew this existed!" exclaim many first-time visitors to the South Seattle Community College (SSCC) Arboretum. Yet this 11-acre garden has existed some 25 years and includes two rose gardens, a perennial garden, and an outstanding dwarf conifer collection. Some have dubbed it "West Seattle's hidden treasure."

A Student-Initiated Project

The college's Landscape Horticulture Program first contemplated the development of an arboretum in 1972. However, it was a student petition that spurred the Seattle Community College board to approve the arboretum in July 1978.

The advantages of the site included impressive views of downtown Seattle and the proximity of the West Duwamish Greenbelt, the largest contiguous woodland within the city of Seattle. But the site also posed a major challenge—terrible soil! A gravel pit once covered much of what became the SSCC campus. It had been filled. And when the arboretum project was approved, the college's heavy equipment-operation classes were using the area as a training site. Their machines would stir up great clouds of dust and further compact what was described as "unusable clay."

In an attempt to improve the soil, SSCC and King County Metro embarked on a cooperative project. Metro provided labor and machinery to grade the land. They covered the entire area with 18 inches of sewage sludge and seeded ryegrass. Despite this and the addition of topsoil, much of the arboretum suffers from heavy, poorly drained soil.

In spite of a shoestring budget and terrible soil conditions, the arboretum began to grow. Steve Nord, former horticulture instructor, spearheaded the effort. He never missed a chance to share his vision of the arboretum with students, college administrators and prospective donors.

LEFT: A visitor, admiring the Helen Sutton Rose Garden; in the foreground, the yellow rose is 'Henry Fonda.' **CENTER:** Bob Fincham (left) cuts the ribbon at the Coenosium Rock Garden on June 2, 2005; Van Bobbitt (right) assists. **RIGHT:** Visitors stroll the Coenosium Rock Garden after the dedication. (Photos by Michael May.)

Support & Development

According to Nord, the original concept was to develop "gardens of the world." But the gardens-of-the-world concept gave way to other ideas, as the reality of funding set in. The theme of each new garden was influenced in large part by its funding source. For example, SSCC obtained a City of Seattle Community Bloc Grant in 1982 to develop a "sensory garden" that would especially appeal to those with impaired vision. And other individual donors wielded varying degrees of influence over the arboretum's development. Through the years, though, the arboretum has benefited from the strong financial and in-kind support of many individuals, businesses and service organizations, particularly in the West Seattle community.

Since the SSCC Arboretum's primary mission was to serve as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for horticulture students, all of the gardens in the arboretum have been installed by students in SSCC landscape construction classes. Much of the irrigation system was developed by students under the guidance of instructors. Pruning and landscape management classes help maintain the arboretum. The garden renovation classes have updated many gardens in recent years. And there's not a day in the academic year when you won't find students using the arboretum for study or hands-on learning. The SSCC Arboretum currently consists of the following gardens:

Entry Garden. This was the first garden completed and the most formal, consisting of extensive paving, rectangular planting beds and a central lawn. The beds were originally used for seasonal color displays but, due to high maintenance costs, were converted to ornamental grasses. Recently, the grasses have gradually given way to combinations of shrubs and herbaceous perennials.

Sensory Garden. Originally created as a garden emphasizing textural, fragrant and edible plants, it has lost its focus over time. New plants were added without regard to the sensory theme. Students recently critiqued it as a "hodgepodge" in need of an "extreme makeover." Regardless of its faults, this garden is favored by visitors, because of its sheltered location, ample seating areas and semi-formal pond with water trickling over rocks.

Helen Sutton Rose Garden. This rose garden was dedicated in 1985 and named in honor of Helen Sutton, a strong supporter of the college and the arboretum since their inceptions; Mrs. Sutton still chairs the Arboretum Committee and sits on the SSCC Foundation's board of directors. This is one of two rose gardens in the arboretum. Some question the wisdom of such high-maintenance gardens, but they are favorites of summer visitors and provide students lots of pruning practice in February.

Acer Garden. A young planting with a variety of maple species, this area focuses on *Acer palmatum* cultivars. This garden is still evolving and has not yet realized its potential. It was built with generous donations from West Seattle service clubs, Julius Rosso Nursery and Briggs Nursery.

Sequoia Grove. Specimens of giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostoboides*) reside here.

Anna Mason Perennial Garden. Donor Nancy Mason wanted this area to be reminiscent of her mother Anna's old-fashioned perennial garden. Herbaceous perennials are combined with forsythia, lilac, mock orange, and deciduous azaleas to remind us of the gardens our grandmothers might have grown.

Gazebo and Mabel Davis Garden. The Federated Women's Club of West Seattle funded construction of the gazebo, and it was built in 1986 by the volunteered labor of "the husbands." It provides a covered seating area with a view of the downtown Seattle skyline.

Milton Sutton Conifer Gardens. This garden has two distinct parts that straddle a gravel road. One side is built adjacent to a streambed and combines many larger conifers

with complementary shrubs and ground covers. On the other side of the road is a collection of dwarf conifers combined with heaths and heathers. It is one of the most colorful sections of the arboretum in winter.

H. Chris and Erma Erickson Garden. Erma Erickson dedicated this garden to her husband Chris in 1995. It is planted with birch, pine and heath to simulate the feeling of Mr. Erickson's birthplace, a small mountainous island in Norway.

Malmo Garden. This garden stems from the late Jean Malmo's desire to memorialize her husband Clark and his father Charles, both prominent Seattle nurserymen. They were rhododendron hybridizers, so that is the focus of this planting. In addition, Jean Malmo contributed many plants in the early days of the arboretum. For instance, she donated 125 Bosnian pines (*Pinus heldreichii*) that were planted throughout the arboretum to provide much-needed structure.

Winter Garden. A small winter garden is taking shape near the front of the arboretum. A witch-hazel collection already existed, but the garden-renovation class decided to create a real winter garden in 2004. Taking cues from the Joseph A. Witt Winter Garden at Washington Park Arboretum, they added *Garrya* species, winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), *Cyclamen coum, Stewartia monadelpha* and other selections for winter interest.

Coenosium Rock Garden. Dedicated in June 2005, this is the crown jewel of the SSCC Arboretum. It aims to be the best public collection of dwarf conifers in the region, and it also contains a scree garden, many non-coniferous alpine species, and a naturalistic water feature. This garden was first conceived by Dianne and Bob Fincham with former horticulture instructor Steve Nord. The Finchams operate Coenosium Gardens, a mail-order nursery in Eatonville, which specializes in dwarf conifers. They wanted to develop a garden that would help both students and the gardening public appreciate the value of dwarf conifers for gardens in Western Washington. After Nord retired, the Finchams, Steve Hilderbrand, landscape construction instructor, Yuki Kato, landscape design student from Japan, and I began to develop a design and action plan for this garden. It took six years to complete, with landscape construction classes tackling a new phase each year.

The Finchams generously donated all of the conifers in the Coenosium Garden.

Their friend, Rick Lupp, owner of Mount Tahoma Gardens—an alpine specialty nursery—donated a large number of alpine plants. Hilderbrand and his students worked overtime in spring 2005 to have the garden completed by its dedication in June. The dwarf conifers offer year-round appeal, because of their various forms, textures and colors—blues, greens and golds. Many, such as *Platycladus orientalis* 'Morgan' (syn. *Thuja orientalis* 'Morgan'), offer seasonal color changes. It is yellow-gold most of the year but turns an intense orange-bronze with the arrival of colder temperatures in November, and returns to yellow-gold with March's increasing warmth.

What does the future hold for the SSCC Arboretum? The Coenosium Rock Garden filled the last undeveloped land in the arboretum. Major renovations of older gardens are being considered. And the Seattle Chinese Garden is being built adjacent to the arboretum. When completed, the Chinese Garden is to be the largest Chinese garden in North America. Along with the SSCC Arboretum, it will put the campus "on the map" for tourists and garden-lovers. The future looks exciting. The South Seattle Community College Arboretum is open to the public seven days a week from dawn to dusk. Please visit.

Van Bobbitt is Horticulture Instructor and Arboretum Coordinator, South Seattle Community College. For a map and directions to the arboretum, visit http://www.south-seattle.org/campus/map.htm. For additional information, call 206-764-5393.

Hollies—A Personal Journey

STORY AND PHOTO BY WALT BUBELIS

Coming from botanical training in Indiana, where the only holly natives were the deciduous *Ilex verticillata* and *I. decidua*, I was only dimly aware of the genus *Ilex*. I must have come across only males or bird-sampled examples, because their natural beauty did not resonate with me until seeing floral-shop, highly-berried sprigs. Often called common winterberry and inkberry back in the Midwest, these genera are just beginning to be used here. Besides dazzling displays of usually red fruits clustering along bare, upright stems, these two are tolerant of damp locales, similar to red-twig dogwood habitats. Hardy and basically pest free, cultivars, such as 'Red Sprite,' a dwarf form of *I. verticillata*, are excellent if space is limited.

Meeting Ilex aquifolium

After graduate school at the University of Washington, evergreen members of the genus became more familiar to me. I couldn't help but notice the ubiquitous English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), so over-planted—first by people and now by birds—that it invades our native forests. But well-grown plants are still a pleasure to observe. A personal favorite is the huge male specimen at Volunteer Park behind the Seattle Asian Art Museum. Walking into its ever-dark canopy, with its thick, smooth-skinned multiple trunks soaring some 60 feet, is a magical experience. I make a point of introducing my broadleaf identification classes at Edmonds Community College to this venerable tree.

The author's cat, Mr. Parker, is pictured here with a 30-year-old specimen of *Ilex* 'Rock Garden.' When grown in full sun, this plant retains an even tighter growth habit.

If space is a concern, consider a slow-growing oddity of English holly, silver porcupine holly (hedgehog in Great Britain), *Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea,' which provides year-long color without the volume of larger, variegated forms. It is wonderfully curious to observe close up. Spines on the topside of its leaves, as well as on the margins, make it a small-site focal point.

Before leaving English holly, I must put in a plug for the blue hollies, which were generated in Massachusetts by one Mrs. Meserve. She admired many attributes of English holly but couldn't rely on its hardiness in New England. Crossing it with the Asian holly, *Ilex rugosa*, resulted in a group of mostly shrubby forms with glossy, blue-tinged foliage. Since most hollies are dioecious (plants are either male or female), she gave her hybrids names, such as *I.* x *meserveae* 'Blue Princess,' 'Blue Stallion,' and so forth. Whether or not these blue-toned selections bear clusters of red fruits, their open, spreading, dark foliage is a good foil for lighter-toned companions.

Elegant Ilex crenata

There are many examples of the artful use of Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) and its cultivars in Seattle parks and the Japanese Garden at the Arboretum. Small-leaved, Japanese hollies have an elegant growth habit and slowly assert themselves in the garden. I am still saddened by the death of a towering Japanese holly at the entrance of the commandant's house at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. Vying for equal status, however, is an attractive example on the University of Washington campus, at the northwest entrance of the Mechanical Engineering building south of the student union. Whenever Japanese holly has a chance to attain some height, it takes on a unique shape, according to the site, but it always seems to have an attractive silhouette.

Because of the rather predictable shapes the commercial industry chooses to rely on, some cultivars of *Ilex crenata* are overused. As a result, because they end up in less than ideal settings, they look stressed. Convex-leaf Japanese holly (*I. crenata* 'Convexa') often looks overly yellow, tightly twiggy, with smallish leaves. Adding to its misery, it often gets tightly sheared into balls. Grown in dappled light with adequate moisture in a non-compacted soil, it rewards gardeners with a more open shape of surprising grace.

Ilex crenata 'Microphylla' is an older cultivar that bears reintroduction. Many older Puget Sound parks or residences have specimens of this fine holly. Whether in sun or dappled shade, its small, pointed leaves set off an often tiered, specimen shrub or small tree. It has some of the same unprepossessing demeanor of the southeast native inkberry, *Ilex glabra*. Pair it with other, larger-foliaged plants, and let them display their brashness; this small-leaved variety helps set the stage for the drama.

One form of Japanese holly that I have enjoyed growing to immense size is *Ilex crenata* 'Mariesii.' Whenever there is a wet snowfall, I have to carefully lighten its burden as it arches downward from its 11-foot height. Normally, 'Mariesii' is supposed to grow slowly to 3 feet—the only other large one I've ever seen was at Lawrence Pierce's garden in the Fauntleroy district of Seattle.

Joining the American Holly Society

Not too long after beginning to teach horticulture some thirty years ago, I met the late Virginia Morrell, then president of the American Holly Society. Her enthusiasm and knowledge of this group of plants led her to recommend several selections for the Edmonds Community College campus. For years we looked out upon a 15-foot, unpruned hedge-wall of the yellow-fruited *Ilex aquifolium* 'Bacciflava,' which grew from a cutting made from a specimen twig Morrell brought to share.

Shortly after joining the American Holly Society, I received an introductory plant that I still treasure today. Now some 30 years old, the diminutive *Ilex* 'Rock Garden' easily fits

my crowded garden, making a small mound. Mine has opened up to the limited light it receives, since it is over-shadowed by deciduous magnolias. Full sun would allow it to retain its normally tight habit. At a recent American Rock Garden Society winter convention, it was offered with just that promise.

'Rock Garden' holly has smaller but similar foliage to one of its parents, *Ilex pernyi*. Both have rather small, elongated leaves with noticeably large, spiny edges. *Ilex pernyi* takes on an arboreal habit, becoming a small, open tree of curious, often grotesque, shape.

Continuing Intrigue

Before starting my teaching career, I worked at various nurseries. One holly that has intrigued me ever since is *Ilex vomitoria* 'Nana' (now *I. vomitoria* 'Dwarf'). This wide-spreading dwarf form of Yaupon holly is an alternative to stiffer, often brittle-branched *I. crenata* 'Helleri.' However, it was the specific name that piqued my curiosity. Looking it up, I discovered the name vomitoria derives from its causing vomiting if made into a tea drunk to excess—similar to the tea of the gauchos of Argentina, maté, also called Paraguay tea. Native Americans made a black tea of this mainly coastal species (ranging from Texas through Florida and north to Virginia). But how did another holly, *I. paraguariensis*, a continent away, become used in similar fashion? Could early Spanish explorers have taken knowledge from the Southeast and applied it to another holly in southern South America? It turns out that *I. vomitoria* is related to no other North American holly but is related to the holly from which maté is made. More research is needed to determine if the indigenous peoples of Uruguay and surrounding areas also brewed teas with their local holly.

Although there are ample species available, most landscapes using holly choose among just a few tried and true types. Whenever I travel, I keep an eye open for other hollies and how they are used. It was therefore a delight to come across an excellent specimen of mountain holly, *Ilex montana*, (syn. *I. monticola*) at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden a few years ago. Large distinctive leaves on a tree-form resembling a *Kobus* magnolia leave me thinking this holly deserves wider usage.

Last, I have just come across Okinawan holly, *Ilex dimorphophylla*, which really can have two different sets of leaves, either oval and entire or spined, rather like a Darwin barberry leaf with numerous spines on the leaf margin. Since I have seen both forms on young plants, this would appear not to be a case of juvenility, as is the case with the holly look-alike, *Osmanthus heterophyllus*. Now, where to plant a set of these curiosities so as to observe future growth? They are only supposed to reach 5 feet, so I should be able to find a place! ~

Walt Bubelis has taught horticulture at Edmonds Community College for 37 years.

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Moving the Hollies: Whither & Why?

By Randall Hitchin

Washington Park Arboretum holly collection is something of a paradox. Tucked away at the southern end of the Arboretum, it is quiet, verdant and remote. So it comes as a great surprise for many visitors to discover that it is actually one of the foremost *Ilex* collections in the country. In fact, depending on how you measure, the Washington Park Arboretum holly collection is the second or third largest in North America.

National Recognition

And while the holly collection may be quiet, verdant and remote, it is anything but forgotten. This collection has received a great deal of attention in recent years and will see great changes in the months and years to come. Three factors provide the primary force for these changes. Among these is the collection's national recognition. In June 2002, the Washington Park Arboretum *Ilex* collection was granted member status in the North American Plant Collections Consortium (NAPCC). This program, established by the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA), has two primary goals. First is the coordination of a continent-wide effort among botanical gardens to conserve plant genetic resources and biodiversity. The second goal is to elevate curatorial standards for the management of plant collections.

The granting of member status to the Arboretum's *Ilex* collection was an exciting event and the culmination of several years of effort on the part of Arboretum staff. With it, the Arboretum holly collection became the first and only species *Ilex* collection in the program. Seattle's cool, moist and mild climate makes it ideal for hollies. It has been estimated that 120 *Ilex* species can be grown here, more than in any other part of the country. The goals for

the Arboretum holly collection, as set down in the NAPCC application, call for 1) a collection of all species hardy in Seattle, 2) obtained from documented, wild-collected material, and 3) with each species represented by at least one male and two female plants. The Arboretum holly collection currently holds specimens representing 44 of the 120 species potentially hardy in this region. These figures clearly indicate that while the collection is very strong, there are ample opportunities for growth.

Master Plan Implementation

Since the granting of NAPCC member status, the Washington Park Arboretum Master Plan has also been completed and ratified. This document is the second factor that will result in significant changes to the holly collection. The plan provides a blueprint for all aspects of collection development over the next 20 to 30 years. Prescribed for the southern part of the Arboretum, including the area currently occupied by the holly collection, is a series of ecogeographic gardens representing

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LEFT: *Ilex perado* subsp. *perado* hails from the Madeira Islands. Rarely seen in the wild, this threatened species will be moved to the location of the Arboretum's new holly collection. It is hardy to zone 7 and may be currently be seen at grid coordinates 4-2E. **TOP:** Female plants of *Ilex aquifolium* 'Fructu Aurantiaca' set abundant fruit and will be removed from the Arboretum's Ilex collection. **BELOW:** *Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea,' silver hedgehog holly, sets no fruit since plants are male. Its spiny, variegated leaves are unusually decorative, and specimens of this English holly cultivar will be retained in the Arboretum holly collection.

the vegetation of the temperate Pacific Rim. As a result, it is necessary to relocate the holly collection before Master Plan implementation can occur in this area.

Environmental Concerns

The third and most recent factor affecting changes to the Arboretum holly collection arises from environmental concerns that

PROPAGATION OF THE GENUS *ILEX*

By Barbara Selemon

Since the early 1990s, plant propagation of taxa for the *Ilex* collection in Washington Park Arboretum has included both wild seed germination and vegetative cutting production. Wild-collected seeds of hollies provide a means of broadening the collection and ensuring the source of new plants. Vegetative propagation by cuttings provides identical copies of current collection members and a more mature plant with known characteristics.

Seed propagation of new, incoming species involves application of pretreatments to break down hard seed-coat dormancy and embryo dormancy prior to germination occurrence. These measures require one to two years, and the outcome is plants of unknown sex. Hollies are dioecious (plants are either male or female) and display sex characteristics only when plants reach maturity and produce flowers—which may translate to four or five years of nursery production before this determination can be made. For these reasons and because of the high incidence of hybridization of seeds in the Arboretum, cutting propagation is the preferred means of reproducing *Ilex* members of the Arboretum's current holly collection.

Cutting production of *Ilex* species is quite variable, with some members of the genus more difficult to root than others. In reviewing plant-production records over the past 12 years, cuttings taken August through November have yielded a slightly better percentage of new plants than cuttings taken in June, July or January. Two-year-old wood has also produced roots slightly better than cuttings of the current year's growth. However, success was basically low all around, with success rates ranging from 0 to 80 percent and the median hovering around 50 percent success.

Propagation of the Arboretum holly collection is challenging for several reasons. First of all, the difficulty of producing new plants by cutting propagation is unknown for many taxa. Second, the outcome is impossible to measure for at least six months, from start to finish. Added to this mystery, until a propagation assessment of plants occurred last summer, it was unknown whether all of the taxa to be reproduced had favorable propagation wood. When cutting wood was slim to nonexistent, a pruning and /or fertilization regimen was undertaken prior to propagation attempts.

Throughout the fall, cuttings will be taken of 62 members of the collection. The goal is to have a 100 percent take, but the extent of success won't be known until the summer of 2006. ~

Barbara Selemon has been Plant Propagator at the University of Washington for 20 years.

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extend well beyond the boundaries of the Arboretum. In the last year, the Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association (WSNLA) began to implement codes of conduct on horticultural business practices and business. The voluntary codes are the result of a workshop held at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis in the winter of 2001. They were developed by scientists, policy-makers, nursery-industry representatives, landscape professionals, staff of botanical gardens and arboreta, as well as other experts, with the hope of curbing the use and distribution of invasive plant species.

One of the initial steps taken by the WSNLA has been to assess the invasive potential of plant species commonly sold through the nursery trade. As a result of this assessment, plants, including *Ilex aquifolium* (English holly) and *Buddleja davidii* (butterfly bush) have been classified as invasive. In support of this initiative, Washington Park Arboretum has adopted changes to its collection policy. Specifically, species classified as invasive will be removed from the collection, or if a specimen is retained, it will be used as an opportunity to interpret the problem of invasive species and the damage they can cause.

Resulting Collection Changes

These three factors, NAPCC membership, Arboretum Master Plan implementation, and collection policy set in response to concerns about invasive species, have all converged on the Arboretum holly collection and will bring about significant changes in the near future. As a result of NAPCC membership, collection goals have shifted towards species, and the number of specimens in this category will steadily increase. Because Master Plan implementation requires a new site for the *Ilex* collection, curation and horticulture staff have evaluated potential sites and selected the three-acre tract bounded by Interlaken Boulevard, Lake Washington Boulevard and Boyer Avenue. Portions of this site are currently occupied by the lilac (*Syringa*) collection, which will be moved to Azalea Way where these shrubs can be more readily appreciated. Finally, guided by changes to collection policy, the majority of *Ilex aquifolium* specimens will not be relocated to the new holly site. Female plants will be removed from the collection because of their invasive risk; however, some male cultivars will be retained because they have teaching value without the potential to spread seed.

The curation staff has recently completed an analysis of the entire Arboretum holly collection and has developed a 'transformation plan' based on these findings and refocused collection goals. From the current total of 484 living *Ilex* specimens, 313 will be removed and 171 will be retained in the collection. Sixteen of those retained are very large specimens that cannot be moved. These specimens will remain in their locations in the current holly collection, while an additional 43 specimens will remain in their current locations in other parts of the Arboretum. The remaining 112 specimens will be relocated to the new holly site by transplantation (69 specimens), propagation (20 specimens) or both methods (23 specimens). This collection transformation will reduce the number of specimens in some categories while increasing them in others, and it is estimated that the completed species *Ilex* collection will contain very nearly the same number of specimens as does the current collection.

In the coming months and years, the Washington Park Arboretum *Ilex* collection will come to have a new place and a new "face." As it becomes the preeminent species *Ilex* collection in North America, it will remind us all that gardens are never static but are in a state of continuous flux. ~

Randall Hitchin is Registrar for the University of Washington Botanic Gardens.

Salalberry, The Once and Future Fruit

A Tribute from our taste tester, George Schenk

Once vital as a food for people, but now almost entirely left for the birds, the salalberry is due for a return to some prominence. This wild fruit of the West Coast remains abundant throughout most of its primordial range, which extends from southernmost Alaska to Santa Barbara County, California. After more than a century of land clearance for agriculture and, more lately, for suburban housing, the berry still ripens close at hand along country lanes, and on steep banks leading down to salt water shores, and in almost any remnant of the region's coniferous woods, even at the base of the solitary Douglas fir spared by the land developer, when by sheer luck the berry becomes incorporated in somebody's garden.

A versatile fruit

Though there is a difference of opinion, in my own flavor registry, the raw berry is a tasty tidbit to be partaken ten or twenty or so at a time—this is not a chowdown item with me. The cooked berry, however, could be a whole chapter in a cookbook. In the kitchen the berry of the salal shrub becomes a many

A few bright leaves garnish freshly picked, succulent salalberries, waiting to be enjoyed in muffins, jam or juice. (Photo by Richie Steffen.)

splendored thing, more than a little like the egg of the chicken in its variety of culinary uses. While that much might be said for a good many other fruits in the world, none I know of exceeds the salalberry in versatility.

An attractive plant—mostly ignored

The salal shrub forms a slowly spreading thicket about three to seven feet tall—lowish and compact in dry, sunny locations, taller and sprangling in a moist, shady place. In every location the shrub is handsomely furnished with evergreen leaves, leathery firm, broad almost to roundness, of a size that fills the palm of one's hand. The flowering is a spring display of little white lanterns dangling in a row along a raceme held out horizontally by the plant, on hundreds of such racemes, a floral main attraction to bumble bees. The fruit ripens in late July and August, blue black berries by the thousands, each a fraction smaller than the commercial blueberry, but keg shaped and dangling in rows on the former floral stems. The tasty salalberry, of a flavor so distinctive that it belies any comparison (not that that will deter me in a forthcoming paragraph), is actually little eaten nowadays. Raccoons and birds take a few, human beings fewer still; most salalberries remain to dry on the branch. . . .

Adaptable to the garden

Salal has lately become far better known as a gardenable shrub than as an edible berry, and is much planted by landscape architects in the Pacific Northwest as a cover for highway embankments and as a filler of beds on the grounds of public buildings. Salal readily adapts to a garden life anywhere along its native West Coast, and also in Japan and the British Isles. The garden plant does best in a rhododendron habitat of part shade, and of moist but fast draining loam, leavened and mildly acid with humus content. Yet salal is adaptable, if slower and lower of growth, to a soil mostly clay or sand. . . .

Eaten fresh and stored for the winter

Ancient Indian uses of salal were typified by those of the Kwakiutl people of British Columbia, who ate the berries fresh and also stored them for the winter in the form of a fruit leather. To make this, the women mashed and partially dried the berries in cedarwood frames placed upon the elephant ear leaves of the swamp plant *Lysichiton*, over fire-heated rocks. The resulting leathery sheets of berries, each about a yard long, a foot wide, and an inch thick, were folded and stored in cedar boxes. Before use, the salalberry leather would be soaked in water overnight, then broken into bits and mixed with oil of the candlefish (*Eulachon*). This prize dish, for which the Indians were so grateful their feelings verged on the religious, was eaten with special black, stain-concealing spoons carved of mountain goat horn.

Naming the berry

Salal: even the name is an Indian history, a word from the Chinook jargon, a trade language used by the Indians and the pioneering whites in their dealings. "Salal" derives from the Indian word *Klkwsala*, as mashed, soaked and broken to bits in the pronunciation of white settlers.

The plant had and perhaps still has another name, which was used by the pioneering Puget Sound area farm families I knew as a boy in the 1930s. These neighbors of ours had cleared their land of conifers and salal (the region's dominant undergrowth) as early on as the 1880s, but had never known the plant by its Chinook trade name: to them it was sowberry—sow as in the porcine species. As a small boy, I puzzled over the connection of berry and pig. I distinctly recall asking a number of adults about it and being given evasive answers. Eventually I stopped wondering, and apparently never reviewed the matter until recently when I was picking salalberries—sowberries—in the course of my studies for this article. Then the answer came

to me in a flash. Sowberries? Of course! The rows of berries are very like the dangling teats of a sow. What poetry there is down on the farm. Or was.

A lesson in Picking and Stemming

The picking is a fairly fast and easy business. One usually stands rather than stoops to pick salalberries, which are held out for the grasping, on raceme structures that are rather like little fishing rods: the berries (dismiss the sow) hang there along the underside of the stem in the position of fishing rod eyelets.

The raw berries are good for a munch. They are firm, chewy, just sweet enough, and of an intricate flavor suggesting a compote of dried figs, fresh apples, blueberries, and black walnuts. But such comparison is an obtuse approximation. A salalberry is a salalberry and nothing else. In addition to being deeply flavorful, the fruit is aromatic. All the fanciful flavor relatives named above come forth olfactorily when I, in action resembling some depraved glue sniffer, bury my nose in a plastic bag filled with salalberries I've just picked.

A wide plastic bag is the best container I've found for the job of picking. One snaps off the racemes, which carry about eight berries each, and drops them into the bag. Fast and easy.

At home, the stemming of the berries goes not so fast nor easily, and requires about an hour's work for every four pounds of fruit. Thumbnail work, the way I do it: While holding the fruit laden raceme in both hands, I ease each berry off with a trigger motion of the thumb, as if I were shooting marbles, gently. This leaves me with a black-rimmed thumbnail, which to anyone else will seem, quite unfairly, to be nothing other than atrocious grooming. So, if my schedule requires that I should appear as spruce as possible during the next twenty four hours or so, I cover the suspect nail with an adhesive bandage. Or to avoid the problem altogether, I use scissors on the berries, but this is slower than thumb action.

Freezing or drying

The salalberry is an excellent prospect for freezing, perfectly retaining the color, texture and flavor of the raw fruit. To freeze the berries, seal them unwashed and dry (or washed and then allowed to dry off) in a plastic bag. To use the frozen fruit, let just the quantity of berries you need roll out of the bag, and return the rest to the freezer.

Salalberries are easily dried, even without fruit drying equipment (which I don't have), simply by spreading the fresh berries on paper towels someplace indoors for about a week, or possibly outdoors in the none too reliable Pacific Northwest sun for a shorter time, until the berries wrinkle up like raisins. While slow, indoor drying by my primitive method has never resulted in moldy berries. To reconstitute the berries, soak them in water overnight, and then simmer them in water to cover for at least ten minutes until the water reduces and berry juice forms a syrup of sufficient strength. The fruit, slow dried and then revived, compares fairly closely to berries simmered while fresh; fast-¬drying would no doubt turn out an even better berry.

Salalberry muffins and pancakes

Stir a handful of salalberries, fresh, frozen or dried and revived, into batter as an excellent alternative to blueberries. When baked in the pastry, the salalberry becomes a blueberry look alike, and tastes not totally unalike. You'll find one great difference when you bite or cut into the cooked product. Salalberries do not bleed into the pastry as do blueberries. There is no blue ink stain. It may be that for some gourmands the ink of blueberries is a valued part of the aesthetics of blueberry muffins or pancakes. For myself, I've always been bothered by it, and I welcome its absence in baked goods made with salalberries.

The casual resemblance between the salal and the blueberry in baking and in other cooking can be a source of pawky entertainment for the cook. In serving up salalberries

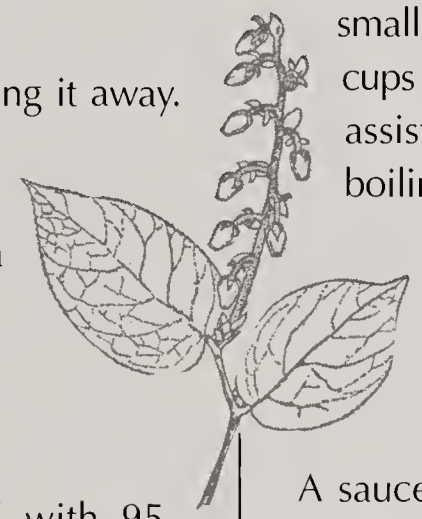
to my uninitiated friends, and not saying a revelatory word, I find that they see blueberries, taste blueberries, and enjoy blueberries. Then when I tell them those were in fact not blueberries, but a fruit found in the woods, they come to attention there at the table. Backs straighten, heads rise, faces show a twinge of alarm. Oh yes, I assure them, salalberries are very good food, a delicacy to the West Coast Indians for thousands of years. My tablemates are not completely assured, but I hope my readers will be. The salaberry is a first rate discovery, or recovery, in this age of world wide exploration for natural flavor. ~

George Schenk grew up picking salalberries in the Northwest but now lives mostly outside of the United States. His most recent book is "Moss Gardening" (Timber Press, 1997). He originally wrote a slightly longer version of this article for the Winter II 1990, Issue #32 of the Indoor Citrus & Rare Fruit Society (IC&RF) newsletter. It is reprinted with the permission of California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc., which has reprint rights for all IC&RF publications. Further information may be obtained at www.crfg.org/fg/icrfsn.html.

~ Recipes ~

Salalberry syrup

Steal it from the salalberry sauce, spooning it away. You may be able to stir a little additional water into the sauce without overly diluting the flavor, and thereby gain a little more syrup.



Salapple juice

Five percent salalberry syrup blended with 95 percent apple juice adds up to a drink authoritatively salal flavored. The apple acquiesces here and plays a quietly supportive role. Pour this drink into a tall glass over ice. Good, very good.

Salalberry jam and jelly

Mash the salalberries to release the small amount of juice this firm fruit provides. Then measure the mashed fruit and add to each cup, a half cup of water. Simmer the mixture for several minutes.

For a jam that will seem to have all the chewy texture of a good bread made with kibbled grains, use the entire quantity of the berry pulp and juice through a strainer. For jelly, one must of course use a jelly bag or some other means of filtering the fruit juice to obtain a gem clear product. But is such clarity important enough to bother with?

Then, for jam or jelly, add one part sugar to two parts of the fruit. Boil the mixture down until it reaches jelling consistency. This old fashioned method takes about half an hour's cooking, and only works with small batches of fruit and sugar, say, six or nine cups in all. Of course, the more modern pectin assisted product requires only a few minutes boiling. Follow the recipe for blueberry jam or jelly usually provided in the foldout that comes with the pectin.

Salalberry sauce

A sauce with a host of uses. To make it, place in a saucepan, one cup of water to every four cups of fruit. Add sugar to taste, more or less two tablespoons for each cup of fruit. Simmer the mixture three or four minutes, stirring it the while. That's all. It's ready to use when cool enough.

For storage, spoon this thick sauce into jars or plastic bags and places the containers in the refrigerator or freezer. The sauce has always kept well in my refrigerator for weeks, until used up.

Salalberry sauce is good as a spread for toast, and is a magnificent mixer—no lesser adjective will do—with many other kinds of fruits, as I will describe later. The sauce is delicious, too, as a topping for vanilla or strawberry ice cream; as a filling for coracles (recipe to follow); and as a source of salalberry syrup, useful in beverage mixtures.

Salalberry swizzle

Mix two parts salalberry syrup with one part light rum. Result: an all-too-good, boozy, fruit drink of about the same alcoholic content as red wine; that is, about 13 percent.

Native Plants: Where to Find and Buy Them

By Nancy Davidson Short

RICHIE STEFFEN

As this dry summer slowly merges into autumn, I once again marvel that my garden's native plants have sailed safely through July and August with almost no watering. Evergreen huckleberries, (*Vaccinium ovatum*) and the deciduous, red berried huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), and taller mahonia (*Mahonia aquifolium*), red flowered currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) and the ground-covering bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*) look as crisply beautiful as ever. And my earliest wild bulbs of spring, trillium (*Trillium ovatum*) and the yellow snow lily (*Erythronium grandiflorum*), depend on dry weather to ripen their bulbs.

Tolerance for summer drought is not the only thing Northwest native plants offer gardeners. Douglas fir, western red cedar, hemlock and spruce create the green horizons of every Western Washington view. And whether you love the greenery, flowers, berries, or fall leaf colors, the plants indigenous to Western Washington equal in ➤

Mahonia aquifolium, also known as tall Oregon grape or Washington holly, is essential for attracting the hummingbirds that winter in Western Washington. Its yellow blossoms light up the woodland in early spring, and its fruit makes excellent jam or jelly. Visit Arboretum specimens at grid coordinates 14-6E and 14-7E.

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loveliness those from any part of the world. Don't take them for granted. Plant hunter David Douglas proved their worth nearly 200 years ago when the Royal Horticultural Society sponsored his search for botanical treasures in northwestern America. He found them and introduced many to England.

The bad news is that fast-growing towns and cities continue to bulldoze patches of green and build new houses where native plants once grew. As their habitats are destroyed, native species struggle and disappear. The good news is that more and more growers are cultivating native plants for gardeners, growing them from seeds or cuttings gathered in the wild and also salvaging plants from logged-off land.

What follows is a list of native plant growers in Western Washington. Some are small, some are specialists in a few species. Others are larger, selling both wholesale and retail. Many are open only by appointment or only on weekends. I have also included the names of some of the all-purpose nurseries in the Seattle area which sometimes act as brokers for native plant growers. Check them out too.

Barford's Hardy Ferns: 15606 Burn Road, Arlington, WA 98223. Torben and Anna Barfod. By appointment only. Call 360-435-6009.

Black Lake Organic Nursery: 4711 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Olympia, WA 98512. Call owner Gary Kline at 360-786-0537. www.blacklakeorganic.com

Botanica: 4112 Corliss Ave. N, Seattle, WA 98103. Pamela Harlow offers a wide selection of perennial species. By appointment only. Call 206-634-1370. www.botanicaplants.com

Changing Seasons: 17637 Bennett Road, Mount Vernon, WA 98237. Heidi Zeretzke. By appointment only. Call 360-424-8417.

Classic Nursery & Landscape Co.: 12528 Avondale Road NE, Redmond, WA 98052. Call Manager Don Rosebrook: 425-885-5678. www.classicnursery.com

Cloud Mountain Farm: 6906 Goodwin Rd, Everson, WA 98247. Weekends and by appointment. Call 360-966-5859. www.cloudmountainfarm.com

Colvos Creek Nursery: Owner, Mike Lee. PO Box 1512, Vashon, WA 98070. The nursery is located at the intersection of Point Robinson Road and SW 240th Street. Call 206-749-9508. Large plant stock includes natives. Mail order and retail.

Far Pastures Nursery: 26929 115th Ave. NE, Arlington, WA 98223. Mail-order and retail by appointment only. Call 360-435-4300. www.farpasturesnursery.com

Foliage Gardens: 2003 128th Ave. SE, Bellevue, WA 98005. Sue Olsen specializes in ferns. Catalog: $2 Open by appointment. Call 425-747-2998. www.foliagegardens.com

Go Native Plants: 2112 NW 199th, Shoreline, WA 98177. Call Don Norman at 206-542 1275 or Bonnie Blessing at 206-706-0904.

The Greenery: 14450 NE 16th Place, Bellevue, WA 98007. Lynn Watts specializes in native bulbs (trilliums, erythroniums, tiger lilies, etc.) and species rhododendrons. By appointment only. Call 425-641-1458.

Hayes Nursery: 12604 Issaquah Hobart Road, Issaquah, WA 98027. Call Manager Hughes Despry to check inventory. Call 425-391-4166. www.hayesnursery.com

Heronswood Nursery, Ltd.: 7530 NE 288th Street, Kingston, WA 98346. By appointment only. Call 360-297-4172. www.heronswood.com

Judd Creek Nursery: 20929 111th Ave. SW, Vashon, WA 98070. By appointment. Call 206-463-9641 or write PO Box 13378, Burton, WA 98013. Owners: John H. and Vicki Browne.

Madrona Nursery: 815 38th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122. Ann Bucher grows groundcovers, shrubs, trees and perennials. By appointment only. Call 206-323-8325.

Maxwelton Valley Gardens: 3443 E French Road, Clinton, WA 98236. Open by appointment. Call 360-379-1770. Owner: Bill Halstead. http://www.whidbey.net/mvg

Mountain Meadow Nursery: 7236 132nd Avenue, NE, Kirkland, WA 98033. By appointment only. Call 425-454-3766.

MsK Rare Plant Nursery: 20312 15th Ave. SW, Shoreline, WA 98177. Open Thursday through Saturday, 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. or by appointment. Call 206-546-1281. You will see many mature native plant species in the 4-acre Kruckeberg Botanic Garden.

Petersen's Perennials: 7802 67th Avenue SE, Snohomish, WA 98290. Seasonal and by appointment. Call Judy Petersen at 425-334-3685.

Piriformis: 1031 N 35th St, Seattle, WA 98103. Call Judy Pepper at 206-632-1760. www.piriformis.com

Plantas Nativa, LLC: PO Box 5271, Bellingham, WA 98227. Call Bay Renaud at 360-715-9655.

Shore Road Nursery: 616 Shore Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363. Owner David Allen has a nursery and demonstration garden of mixed plants. Call 360-457-1536.

Soos Creek Gardens: 12602 SE Petrovitsky Road, Renton, WA 98058. Seasonal and by appointment. Call Helmut and Lourdes Brodka at 425-226-9308.

Sound Native Plants: PO Box 7505, Olympia, WA 98507. Call 360-352-4122. Wholesale (and retail with minimum order of $100). By appointment. Grows red flowered currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) and mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*). www.soundnativeplants.com

Steamboat Island Nursery: 8424 Steamboat Island Road, Olympia, WA 98512. Open Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Call 360-866-2516. www.olywa.net/steamboat

Tadpole Haven Native Plants: 20314 197th Ave. NE, Woodinville, WA 98077. Ask Shirley Egerdahl for her plant list. By appointment only. Call 425-788-6100 or 206-240-5257. www.tadpolehaven.com

Tree Frog Farm: John Robinson and Diana Pepper, 3679 Sunrise Road, Lummi Island, WA 98262. By appointment only. Call 360-758-7260. www.treefrogfarm.com

Woodbrook Nursery: 1260 69th Avenue NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98335. Ingrid Wachtler is developing a native trail with mature, labeled plants. Open Friday and Saturday and by appointment. Call 253-265-6271 or 253-225-1900. www.woodbrook.net

Woods Creek Nursery: 21008 Woods Creek Road, Monroe, WA 98272. Call Sharon Rousse or Dennis Gallagher at 360-794-6823. www.woodscreeknursery.com

The following nurseries in and around Seattle often carry a limited inventory of native shrubs, trees, groundcovers, and perennials:

Christianson's in Mount Vernon

City Peoples Garden Stores in Seattle

Cloud Mountain Nursery in Everson

Edgewood Flower Farm in Edgewood

Emery's Garden in Lynnwood

Furney's in Des Moines

Gray Barn in Redmond

Molbak's in Woodinville

Olympic Nursery in Woodinville

Sky Nursery in Shoreline

Swanson's in Seattle

Wells Medina in Medina

Nancy Davidson Short, a former *Sunset Magazine* editor, long-time gardener, and Arboretum Foundation member, is the author of the column Garden Notes, in the Foundation's newsletter, Ground Work. She gardens at her home on the shore of Lake Washington.

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A NATIVE PLANT CLASSROOM:

The West Mercer Elementary Courtyard

By Marilyn O'Neill and Ingrid Stipes

Photos by Robin Lorenzini

Native plant gardens have become an oasis in our drought-ridden times. As a result, we are learning the many benefits of using native plants at home and in public spaces. It was this knowledge—coupled with the community's desire to remodel a school's under-utilized central courtyard—that propelled Anne Fox of Mercer Island to lead the effort resulting in the

Sunlight captures West Mercer Elementary School student Mina So and the details of the school's central courtyard—a new outdoor classroom designed as a Washington state native habitat garden.

creation of a thriving outdoor classroom at West Mercer Elementary School.

Launching the Dream

In the summer of 2001, Fox contacted school personnel to discuss transforming West Mercer's unused courtyard, centrally located within the school building, into a functioning, inviting outdoor classroom. She received approval that fall, and one year later, with guidance from landscape architect Keith Geller and input from the school community, a conceptual design was created and approved. The school community chose to define the space using plants and design that represent three aspects of Washington State: Northwest woodlands, the Puget Sound coastline and Eastern Washington's geology. Thanks to a generous grant from the Rotary Club of Mercer Island—and matching funds, supplies and labor from the greater school community—the project finally got underway. On September 27, 2004, its completion was celebrated with a dedication ceremony.

A Courtyard Classroom

As the school year began, it was time to put this new classroom to the test. With the goal of engaging students in the courtyard's design and caretaking responsibilities, teachers initiated a student Stewardship Club. Students learned the names of the native plants and became stewards of this beloved space and its bountiful plant life, including kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), bear grass (*Xerophyllum tenax*), evergreen huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*), deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*), sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*), shore pine (*Pinus contorta* var. *contorta*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) and red huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*). They enjoyed creating labels for each plant, and one student even exclaimed, as she matched photo to actual plant, "This is the best scavenger hunt, ever!"

Kindergarten and second grade students prided themselves on learning the names of each plant and eagerly shared observations with their families as they watched ferns unfold, trilliums bloom, and currants blossom. They even looked forward to weeding sessions to keep horsetails and newly sprouted maple seedlings from invading their outdoor classroom.

A key feature of the courtyard is amphitheatre-style seating and an instruction area for entire classrooms. For small groups, the space offers a quiet alternative to noisy recesses, ideal inspiration for artistic endeavors, and a retreat for young authors.

Introducing Birds

By year's end, this devoted team of stewards decided their habitat needed even more life and liveliness, so they met with Audubon volunteer Judy Roan to learn the best approach for attracting birds. Within weeks, a feeding station was installed and word had spread among neighborhood birds. Staff and students began observing a variety of avian visitors: mourning doves, black-capped chickadees, robins and house finches.

Continued Improvements

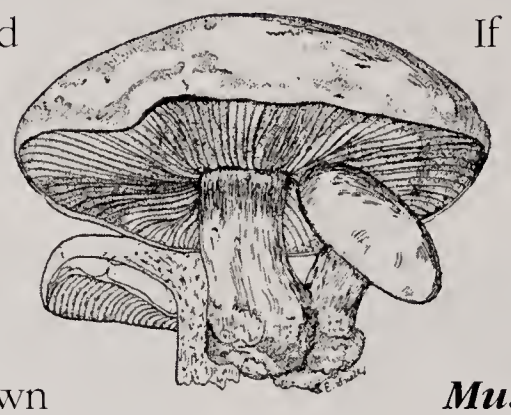
The next steps for this enthusiastic group include developing a nature library and installing courtyard viewing-stations, with field guides, binoculars and record-keeping materials. To be sure, this native courtyard will be well cared for and continue offering rich learning opportunities for students of all ages. ~

Marilyn O'Neill teaches kindergarten and **Ingrid Stipes** teaches fourth grade at West Mercer Elementary School.

Garden Mushrooms

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOY SPURR

Starting in late August and continuing through the fall months, it does not require long drives to a mature forest to satisfy a mushroom hunter. After ten days of soaking rain, walk across your lawn or down your garden paths, and you may find a multitude of umbrella shaped mushrooms among the grasses, beneath trees and shrubs, and along pathways—and even a few puffball types at the edge of heather beds. The vegetative portion of mushrooms, known as mycelium, lies dormant under the soil for many months, or even years, until the favored moisture and warmth conditions cause fruiting bodies to form on the mycelium, to expand and then to erupt above ground. Some larger sized mushrooms last for several days. Others are fragile and may decay within hours.



Mushrooms are fungi, members of the kingdom of living organisms that grow and fruit much the way plants do but which lack roots, stems, leaves, flowers and seeds. They also lack chlorophyll, so they must get their food by absorption from living plants or animals or from their remains in decaying debris.

There are thousands of species of mushrooms throughout the world. You will soon discover that certain species always grow in a specific habitat or biological community. The mycelium of many form a beneficial relationship with other plants—particularly the roots of trees, shrubs and grasses—that permits an exchange of nutrients and moisture and contributes to the health and growth of the host plant. There are mushroom species that have a mycorrhizal association with typical Pacific Northwest forest trees, such as western red cedar, hemlock, Douglas fir and red alder. If you live next to such a forest, the fruiting bodies of these fungi may pop above ground where these tree roots have invaded your lawn or garden.

Mushroom Identification

Not all mushrooms are edible. Many are poisonous, some extremely dangerous. Consult one of many available field guides, or better yet, ask an expert to correctly identify a mushroom before you consume it. The Puget Sound Mycological Society has a list of identifiers who can assist you in identifying fresh specimens. Most field guides list spore color as the first step in identification. (Mushrooms reproduce by means of spores, which range in color from white to shades of yellow, pink, brown and black.) To determine the color of a mushroom's spore, cut the stipe (stalk) from the mushroom and place the cap gill-side down on a piece of white paper. Cover it with a glass or plastic bowl and leave for several hours. If the mushroom is sufficiently mature, spores will be deposited on the paper.

Edible Garden Mushrooms

A large, meaty mushroom, a good edible that grows in compost piles and orchards as well as in lawns, is *Agaricus augustus*, the prince. It is easy to recognize, not only because of its large size, but also because of the somewhat squared shape of its cap, which is light tan covered with close pressed, small, reddish brown scales. It is stained yellow, then orange brown as it ages. Gills are cream, turning to rose and then purplish brown in age. The stipe is shaded with brown. Spores are purple brown. An interesting characteristic is its almond odor.

TOP: One of the most poisonous garden mushrooms is *Galerina autumnalis*, which contains deadly amanita toxins. **LOWER LEFT:** *Conocybe tenera*, one of the most common conocybes in this area, is cinnamon-brown or yellow in color and fades to cream with age. **LOWER RIGHT:** *Hebeloma crustuliniforme*, poison pie, can make a beautiful lawn display, although it is poisonous to humans.

The mycelium of *Marasmius oreades* spreads evenly in all directions, seeking food, and forms a circle of fruiting bodies, often in the lawn, known as a fairy ring. Left undisturbed, such rings may, in time, become quite large. Cap color varies from white to tan; gills and stipe are of similar color. Spores are white. This species has good flavor and is easily dried for future use. If your lawn has been treated with weed killer, do not pick this mushroom, or any other edible mushrooms, for food.

Too Risky to Eat

In this same habitat there grows a poisonous mushroom known as *Clitocybe dealbata*, the sweat-producing Clitocybe. This mushroom contains muscarine, a poisonous compound which produces disagreeable cases of profuse sweating as well as other symptoms of poisoning. The cap, gills and stipe are white to grayish; spores, white to cream. Gills tend to run down the stipe, which helps distinguish this species from the fairy ring mushroom.

The tall, all-white *Lepiota naucina*, the white lepiota, usually produces several fruiting bodies at the same time, an attractive contrast against a green lawn. It has white spores, and the gills are covered with a white veil, which breaks and forms a ring on the stipe. White lepiota is not recommended for picking as an edible, because it looks similar to several, deadly poisonous white amanitas.

Hebeloma crustuliniforme, poison pie, has a cream colored cap that is reddish brown at the center, smooth and slimy when wet, a white stipe, brownish gills and brown spores; it gives off the odor of radish. It often forms a circle of mushrooms similar to the fairy ring of *Marasmius oreades*. Huge clusters of poison pie fruited in a well watered lawn in an Issaquah subdivision for several years. Apparently weed killer chemicals applied to the lawn killed the mycelium, as it has not re appeared recently. Sad, because this was a spectacular display and did not harm the lawn, which remained green after the mushrooms decayed. As its common name indicates, it is poisonous to humans.

Conocybes are known as cone heads or dunce caps. They are fragile, are partial to warm weather and fruit in great abundance on watered lawns. Edibility of most is unknown, but they are too small to be of food value, and some are known to be dangerously poisonous. Varying by species, the caps are white to brown and are bell shaped. There

ON MUSHROOMS AND SQUIRRELS

By Mary Johnston

My garden, like many others hereabout, sprouted a plethora of mushrooms last fall. This bounty brought to mind a time when my husband and I witnessed a most fantastic outdoor scene.

A red squirrel was racing up and down a tree in our garden. With binoculars I watched him as he skittered down the tree and across the ground about 5 or 6 feet from its base, where he stopped at a cluster of mushrooms. First, he bit off a chunk of one of the smaller ones; then he raced up the tree with it, parking it in the crotch of some branches. He hurried down the tree to repeat this trip several times, each time stashing chunks in different crotches. When he ran out of the small mushrooms in that particular clump, he started on the bigger mushrooms, some of them as big as salad plates!

Choosing a mushroom easily three times his size, he first broke the stem off at the ground and then half-carried, half-dragged the entire mushroom to the tree. He seemed to puzzle on this for a bit, trying to figure out how he could haul his huge treasure up the trunk. Then he separated the stem from the cap and took the stem up the tree in chunks. Even with this success, he often had frustrating mishaps, shattering pieces and scattering them below when he strove to carry his booty between branches. Down he would come for another try. By this time he was running out of crotches. Finally, he tried, very hard, for some time, to drag the entire, huge cap up the tree. Then, dancing and chattering in frustration, he started eating chunks off the cap, gave up on the remainder of that one, and began the process all over again with another mushroom just as big as the first. When I finally gave up, after watching him for half an hour, he was still at it.

Later, when I went outside to look at the remaining mushrooms, they were all gone, and at the base of the tree a pile of caps, all about eight inches across, were scattered about, many half eaten. What a work out for that little creature. ~

Mary Johnston, a long time member of Arboretum Foundation Unit 5, enjoys gardening and wildlife-watching on Camano Island, Washington.

are more than 50 species in North America, largely differentiated by microscopic features. The most common conocybes in our area are *Conocybe tenera* which is cinnamon brown or yellow, usually fading to cream in age; and *Conocybe lactea* which is all white but darkens to cinnamon brown in age. *Conocybe lactea* is a frail fruiting body that usually appears in early morning but shrivels up by early afternoon.

Walking from the lawn into the garden, it is always exciting to come across the tall *Lepiota rachodes*, shaggy lepiota. As the tan cap expands, its surface breaks into pointed scales, giving it a shaggy appearance. Gills, stipe and spores are white. The stipe thickens at its base and has a large, thick ring. Compost piles that contain grass clippings are one of its favorite haunts. The shaggy lepiota is considered edible, but be aware that some people have experienced gastric upset from eating it. This species is also similar in appearance to a poisonous mushroom that is prevalent in the Rocky Mountains, *Chlorophyllum molybdites*.

Don't Eat These Either

Dead trees and stumps harbor *Armillaria mellea*, the honey mushroom. Caps vary from tan to dark brown, gills are cream to tan, and the stipe is tan to dark brown towards the base, with a small ring formed by the remains of a veil. It usually grows in dense clusters. Although it is considered an edible, do not eat it if the tree stumps or logs have been treated with a chemical to hasten decay. Unfortunately, because it often kills living trees, this pretty mushroom has a bad reputation among gardeners.

One of the most dangerous poisonous mushrooms that visits our gardens is *Galerina autumnalis*, which contains the deadly amanita toxins. Caps are yellow brown when moist, fading to buff when dry. Gills are a similar color, and spores are rusty brown. The stipe is pale brown but becomes dark brown towards the base, and there is a narrow white ring on the stipe. It grows on wood and fruits in great quantities on wood bark mulch in the garden.

A dingy yellow or brown, ball shaped mushroom, known as *Scleroderma citrina*, the thick skinned puffball, is often found fruiting among heathers. When cut in half, the thick, persistent rind and the dark gray to black interior spore mass distinguishes this poisonous mushroom from several puffball species that are edible.

One of the prettiest mushrooms is *Aleuria aurantia*, the orange fairy cup. It favors newly cultivated ground and the many, little cup shaped fruiting bodies are bright orange. Although edible, there is very little substance to these cups. Just enjoy their charm.

In fact, given the risks involved in eating any garden mushroom, don't taste any of them. It is best just to appreciate the beauty, mystery, and important functions of these fungi—unless you choose to seek the help of an experienced mushroom identifier. If your curiosity about mushrooms is increased by those that reside in your garden, join the Puget Sound Mycological Society and learn more about these fragile beauties, among the earliest of organisms to appear on earth. ~

Joy Spurr is a member of the Arboretum Foundation, and her photographs often accompany articles printed in the Bulletin; she is also a member of the Puget Sound Mycological Society. For information about the Society or to request the help of a mushroom identifier, call 206-522-6031 or investigate the Web site: www.psms.org.

Books Recommended for the Pacific Northwest:

Ammirati, Joseph F. "The New Savory Mushroom" (revised and enlarged from the original book by Margaret McKenny and Daniel E. Stuntz). Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1987.

Arora, David. "Mushrooms Demystified." Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1986.

QUITE A PILE OF BOOKS:

Northwest Authors Outdo Themselves

BY BRIAN THOMPSON

Every year the list of new books by Pacific Northwest authors seems to get longer, and better! This year there are 15 new titles to consider for your home or professional library. Let's begin.

•Essays—The work of botanists and gardeners is typically solitary, giving time for considerable reflection. A special few have written down and published their thoughts. We are fortunate that the essays of three of our region's own have been collected and published during the last year.

Long time Seattle Tilth members will need no introduction to the Naked Gardener, having undoubtedly enjoyed Ian Taylor's witty commentaries the first time around in the Seattle Tilth newsletter from 1991 to 1996. The rest of us now can enjoy the collected essays in "Suburban Adventures of a Naked Gardener." Subjects are wide-ranging and may stray beyond the garden path but rarely down unrelated pathways, and they are always handled with a wry wit that is pure pleasure. For example, pupating ladybugs have a "mid-life crisis of a most extreme kind," while a discussion of netting to frustrate the family cats suddenly recalls a comment by Allen Ginsburg, which recalls a group of English poets, which recalls British road terminology, which recalls . . . and so forth.

Next it is appropriate to consider the work of Arthur Lee Jacobson, who not only wrote the back cover quote for Ian Taylor's book, but also is the editor and publisher of "Selected Writings of Esiquio Narro, 1949-1997." The personal essays and poems here are a bit darker and more reflective than in the previous title and concern a more general palate of ideas and concerns. Narro was a gardener for most of his career (and much of that at the Arboretum) and was well grounded in the realities of life. This included younger years in Mexico and south Texas, followed by 57 years in the Pacific Northwest, until his death in 1999. In a kind gesture in memory of his friend, Jacobson has designated that all net proceeds from this book be donated to the Elisabeth C. Miller Library. Thank you, Arthur Lee!

The proceeds from "Walking in the Beauty of the World" support another of our regional organizational treasures, the Washington Native Plant Society. Another collection of previously published articles, these well-crafted stories were written by botanist Joseph Arnett for the newsletter of the Central Puget Sound Chapter of the society. Naturally, these focus on our native flora and often include several perspectives on subjects of serious concern, such as climate change and loss of habitat. Better yet is the infectious enthusiasm he brings to his chosen profession that makes this book easy to recommend to many beyond the native plant community.

•Wildlife in the Garden—Frances Wood provides a good bridge to this next section in "Brushed by Feathers," with month-by-month short stories on her observations of birds, many from her own garden on Whidbey Island. She, too, excels at combining very personal accounts

with a lot of good information about her subjects, without confining that information to the standard field-guide format. Even the non-bird-lover will find something of interest here in her fine, thoughtful writing, but the book will particularly resonate with those who enjoy nature in its many forms, especially feathered.

"Welcoming Wildlife To The Garden" is an excellent handbook for the gardener who is willing to share the garden. The work of three British Columbians, its scope encompasses the myriad fauna found throughout North America. Very practical and thorough, the detailed plans for feeders, houses, and special purpose structures are alone worth the price of the book, but it also includes plant lists and design elements helpful to a range of gardening sites, from balconies to woodlands.

Russell Link established his reputation as a writer in 1999 with "Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest." With his new "Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest," he takes less of a gardener's view of wildlife, and instead provides a comprehensive review of the creatures we might potentially encounter in all our human endeavors. He is quite detailed in presenting the positive aspects of these interactions, and gives many suggestions on how to minimize the negative, all the while providing good information about the life habits of our native fauna.

•**Gardening Guides**—Several of the big names amongst local garden writers have made this an especially abundant year, particularly for the relatively new gardener in the Northwest. Looking these over, I feel like a tourist reviewing travel guides; all the choices are good, but picking a "best" for a specific gardener's needs would be a challenge. Take the time to review these books at the Arboretum Gift Shop or the Miller Library. You may find you have to buy them all!

Debra Prinzing and Mary Robson have combined forces to write the "Washington & Oregon Gardener's Guide," a thorough intro-

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duction to plants ranging from annuals to trees that this experienced team recommends for our region. An encyclopedia at heart, each entry provides a careful description, including cultural needs, uses in designs, and recommended varieties. At the beginning of the book a brief introduction provides the basics, without overwhelming, while at the end there are several lists and short essays overflowing with more help.

Of similar style, if a bit more condensed, is the latest in the Lone Pine series from Marianne Binetti (this time with Don Williamson) on the "Best Garden Plants for Washington and Oregon." Those familiar with these publications already know this is an easy fit-for-your-pocket format to pack along to the nursery for quick research. Plants recommended here are the "best of the best," drawing from Binetti's previous books recommending annuals, perennials, trees, and shrubs, and filling gaps left by those titles, including roses, herbs, grasses, and vines.

Perennials are the special focus of two more books from our local stars. Ciscoe Morris jumps into the book-publishing world by co-authoring with Teri Dunn the northwestern edition of Jackson & Perkins's "Selecting, Growing, and Combining Outstanding Perennials." While this is one of a national series that contains much generalized, but still fine, material, there is also plenty of "ooh la la" in Ciscoe's bylined sections to provide his familiar, Northwest point of view.

Marty Wingate's "Big Book of Northwest Perennials" is relatively compact despite the title, but there's nothing small about the quantity or quality of recommended perennials, nor the author's personal knowledge and careful research. Design is important throughout the introductory chapters and within each entry, and Wingate has a knack for expressing complex concepts in easy-to-understand terms, such as "grow with like-minded plants." She also walks the reader through the who, what, where and why of choosing, finding, planting, and nurturing plants, a process that many garden books take on, but few explain so effectively.

A great companion book to all the previous guides is Debra Prinzing's second title in our review, the "Pacific Northwest Garden Survival Guide." Unlike the others, this does not have an A-Z listing of plants, but instead takes an in-depth look at the environmental nuances of gardening in the Pacific Northwest. By recognizing the wide variety of soils, moisture, and microclimates in this one region, Prinzing fills in a lot of the how-to-cope details often treated superficially in many guides that rush to get to flower descriptions.

•**Bainbridge Island Gardens**—How did one island become such a gardening paradise? Bainbridge Island is the source for two of this year's reviewed books and they are easily the top choices for the coffee table, perhaps because Barbara Denk provided the remarkable photographs for both.

George Little and David Lewis have established a widely recognized reputation for their fine garden sculpture. Less well known, but still sought out, is their exquisite small garden that displays many of their pieces. Previously unknown, at least by me, was their collective talent as writers. While photographs of fountains and semi-tropical plants will lure you into their first book, the text will teach you to be a better gardener. There are a lot of ideas here, discovered by two very serious gardeners who aren't afraid to experiment. When done with the book, I was bursting with ideas to apply to my own yard.

Debra Prinzing has been extremely busy recently, as evident by her three new books published over the last year. And what range! "The Abundant Garden" is clearly the most sumptuous. Much like the catalog of a fine art exhibit, it tours the reader through nine island gardens, any of which I would happily call my own. But this is not just a visual exhibit; of equal importance are the stories about the

people behind the gardens, and these stories are as varied as the gardens themselves. Tying all this together, Prinzing includes an essay on the practical elements of creating a key element in each of the subject gardens.

•**Reference Materials**—Susan Hill and Susan Narizny are clear advocates for keen gardeners suffering from plant lust. Knowing, firsthand, the agony of being unable to find the latest must-have species or cultivar, they have created the remedy, "The Plant Locator: Western Region." Their third publication, this reaches beyond the Northwest to encourage searching for plants from over 300 nurseries in 11 western states plus British Columbia. But this is more than just a reference book for libraries and nurseries. The avid or novice gardener can get top notch help with proper plant nomenclature, learn the botanical name for an exhaustive list of common names, or—and this is my favorite use—read through the list of cultivars available for a favorite genus so as to buy even more!

Finally the indomitable Arthur Lee Jacobson has provided us with "Trees at the Locks." This eight-page booklet provides an update to the map from Jacobson's 1989 (and out of print) book "Trees of Seattle" and lists over 100 new trees and shrubs. With bed-by-bed listings, this is must-have guide for any visit to the Carl S. English, Jr. Botanical Garden at the Hiram Chittenden Locks..

There. Your fall and winter are set with lots of good reading, reflecting and planning ahead. Enjoy! ~

Brian Thompson is Curator of Horticultural Literature at the Elisabeth C. Miller Library.

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